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News from the Y

Lacrosse ... Offered at the YMCA!

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Director of Youth Sports and Aquatics

The Grand Traverse Bay YMCA offers many youth sports, but one sport has ignited a passion like no other sport in recent memory. That sport is Lacrosse. You might have heard of it....it's that game the Native Americans played a long time ago with a ball and some sticks. But it's more than that. Lacrosse has a history as colorful as the people who play it today. It's the original sport! Lacrosse was here first!

Lacrosse was "discovered" by the first European settlers, missionaries, and explorers. Named by early French settlers, "lacrosse" literally means "the cross", a generic term for any game using a curved stick and ball. No one knows when lacrosse was invented - many legends exist, but we do know it was played for many reasons, including ceremony, spectator enjoyment and even to settle territorial disputes between tribes. Expanding from the Eastern coast of the United States, the game grew popular in Canada and then spread to Europe. The growth of non-native lacrosse from the Montreal area eventually led to its position today as one of the fastest growing sports worldwide (over half a million play today). Now it's a worldwide.

So what's the attraction? Why are people so passionate about lacrosse? The answer is obvious to anyone who has played. Simply put it's fun. Lacrosse is called the "fastest sport on two feet" because lacrosse players run a lot - they have to be in good shape physically, making lacrosse a terrific cross-training sport. The field is about the size of a football field including the end zones, so there is a lot of ground to cover! The ball is solid rubber, weighs 5 ounces, and can travel at speeds over 90 miles per hour. Lacrosse is similar to sports like hockey, soccer, football, rugby, and basketball because those sports were developed from lacrosse. Players of those sports will see a great benefit from playing lacrosse in their off-season.

The Grand Traverse Bay YMCA is the home for lacrosse in our area. Indoor skills classes are forming now for January through March 2009, then we head outside for the Spring Leagues in April and May 2009. Boys in grades 1st-12th may play in the leagues. Over 200 boys played in 2008, and we expect more in 2009. For women, the Y offers a developmental program to educate and promote the sport with leagues beginning next year, women's and men's lacrosse are played with different rules and use different equipment. The hope is to get enough ladies to begin Ladies Leagues in 2010. Lacrosse is an

independent club sport run through the YMCA, competing against other high school teams throughout the state.

Players need to have their own protective gear required. However, the cost is less than many other sports. Injuries in lacrosse are similar to those in other sports like soccer and football and statistically less than many other sports. The rules are strictly enforced for safety and all participants will quickly realize that a fellowship exists between all players, young and old. Teams always cheer each other after games and shake hands to thank each other for playing. It is heartwarming to watch a display of honor and gratitude, even after a hard-fought game. You are invited to watch Traverse City take on Petoskey, Cadillac, and several downstate teams this spring - FREE. It's a blast to watch!

To find out more about lacrosse as a sport, upcoming skills classes, spring league information, rules, gear, and why you and your kids should "pick up sticks", visit the YMCA's website: www.gtbayymca.org". Try a skills class or get involved in officiating or coaching. Over 90 high school games and 50 elementary games are scheduled this spring. Call the YMCA at 231-933-YMCA (9622) or marks@gtbayymca.org, and ask to speak to the Youth Sports Director, Mark Sinclair, to get involved or if you have any questions about Y Lacrosse. Join the fellowship – play Lacrosse!